

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with a rough and tough man named Esau who cried like a baby. The Bible states: **"Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears (Heb12:17)**

Two things are at work in our story, a birthright and a blessing. Esau despised his "birthright" (Gen. 25:34), but sought the "blessing" with tears. The sad part of the story is that the birthright involved worshiping God and the blessing involved worshiping the earth. In the age of the patriarchs the oldest male member of the family was the priest. Noah, Job, Abraham, etc., all built altars and made offerings to God on behalf of their families. When the patriarch died the privilege of being priest was passed on to his oldest son. This was the "birthright". Esau was the oldest son but had no interest in being a priest. Thus he traded his birthright for a mess of pottage. That's why the Bible calls him "godless" (Heb. 12:16). The blessing, however, involved earthly riches like the abundance of grain and new wine, etc. (Gen. 27:27-29). That's what made him cry.

Biologically speaking, there are three kinds of tears. First the basal tears that are continuous and lubricate the eyes. Second, the reflex tears that occur when we chop onions or get smoke in our eyes. Third, the emotional tears that are triggered by something going on in our heart. All three kinds, of course, were given to us by God for a purpose. When there are no tears something is wrong. Medically speaking this abnormality is called dry eye syndrome, or keratitis sicca. Spiritually speaking the lack of tears might well be indicative of a hardened heart. In both instances, however, something is wrong! Jesus left us an example that we should follow in His steps. Jesus wept! If Jesus wept, maybe we should too. Crying can actually produce something therapeutic and cleansing in those who want to be like Jesus.

Something was wrong with Esau. He wept over the wrong things. He was a skillful hunter and a man of the field (Gen. 25:27). His body was covered with hair and his hands and feet were calloused from many years in the wilderness. Esau was tough. He could endure inclement weather and remain dry eyed at the sight of his own blood. The thought of not being rich, however, was more than he could bear. It touched a tender place in his heart and triggered his shameless tears. He begged his blind father again and again to reverse the decision and pronounce the blessing upon him. Esau did not, however, inherit the blessing even though he sought it diligently with tears.

Tears can be an eloquent means of communication. Little babies shed tears when they have no other way of sharing their emotions. Victims of traumatic brain injury who cannot speak can share their pain by shedding a tear. Illiterate natives, and strangers who cannot speak our language, can build a bridge of communication to us with tears. Amy Lambert composed the song: *Tears are a language that God understands*. This is, however, a two edged sword. Because God understands He is not always happy at the things that make us cry. He is a Jealous God, that's why He was so disgusted with Esau. God understood Esau's tears. He knew that Esau really didn't care about Him. He knew that Esau loved the things of earth more than he loved Him. Since there are so many people in the world like Esau, it is no wonder that Jesus is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Even God does not like to be despised and rejected!

When the widow's son at Nain died Jesus told her not to cry (Lk. 7:13). When the daughter of Jairus died Jesus told the family not to cry (Lk. 8:52). Yet, when Lazarus died "Jesus wept" (Jn. 11:35). This, as you know, is the shortest verse in the Bible. On the surface it seems contradictory. Of course,

it is not! In each instance Jesus knew that He was going to raise each individual from the dead. Yes! This was also true of Lazarus. Four days before Jesus raised him from the dead He told His disciples **“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up” (Jn. 11:11)**. When they didn’t understand Jesus told them plainly: **“Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him” (Jn. 11:14)**. It is therefore obvious that Jesus was not weeping for Lazarus. He was “glad” that Lazarus died for raising him from the dead would increase the faith of His disciples.

Why then did Jesus weep? It seems that Jesus was **“deeply moved in spirit and troubled”** by their lack of faith in him (Jn. 11:33). Jesus actually wept before He even came to the tomb where Lazarus was buried. Lazarus was not the problem, the people were! Some time later Jesus would weep over the city of Jerusalem for the same reason (Lk. 19:41-44). Esau wept over earthly things. Jesus wept over things that are eternal.

Jesus said to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Esau didn’t! We should!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce